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"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you."— JOHN xiv. 2, 3.

WE do not know much about the other life. But we know this: that the same Being rules by the same laws in this world as in all other worlds. As God is always the same, we may be sure that his laws and methods in this world are not contradicted or opposed to his methods in other worlds, and that we may learn something of what he does for us in the future by what he does for us in the present. The future life will not, indeed, be a mere repetition of this, but doubtless will correspond to it.

Let us look, therefore, at some of these correspondences or analogies, in order to correct and elevate our ideas of heaven.

When a child comes into this world, he comes into a home which God has provided for him beforehand. He finds father and mother, brothers and sisters, a house, rooms, books, schools, play,— indoors and out-of-doors,— young companions, all provided for him beforehand. He is at once absorbed in these outward interests, and does not stop to look in and ask, "Who am I?" and "Whence did I come?" All that is left for a future time.

So it may be with us when we enter the next world. We shall find a home provided for us, wiser and older friends to meet and receive us, enough around for us to

see, to do, to love, to enjoy. We may become little children again, — all of us. We may lay down the burden of years and cares, and begin life anew under these glad, angelic auspices. All the knowledge and faculty which we have gathered in this life will seem childlike ignorance by the side of the wisdom of these lofty and grand souls who may be to us guardians, guides, and friends. We shall feel ourselves little children beside them in our ignorance and weakness, and shall gladly be guided by their larger experience.

In this world, all our activity and all our joy come from three sources, — Thought, Love, Work. First there is intelligence, exercise of intellect, creating our knowledge, giving the power of thinking accurately and justly: there is that inspiration which all men share more or less, by which a stream of new ideas flows into the mind from some upper source. This is one fountain of human joy. A man who is thinking and learning something has a certain contentment and satisfaction of mind in that. A second source of contentment is work. To be able to exercise our powers, to accomplish something, to imitate God by creating, to bring order out of confusion, to add something to the wealth of the world, — this is another great source of satisfaction. And, third, there is love. To be able to go out of ourselves, to sympathize with others, to enter into their needs and perplexities, to help them forward, to enjoy and reverence great qualities of mind and heart, to feel at home in the society and friendship of other minds, — this is another of the essentials of happiness. But, when we have them all united, we have a sort of heaven, even in this life. We have a perfect

contentment when we work steadily for a good end,— work in sympathy and friendship with others, and work intelligently, with new thoughts coming to us, and gaining new knowledge out of our work evermore. That makes heaven here, and that is why Paul spoke of sitting in heavenly places with Jesus Christ now.

Heaven hereafter is probably the same thing, only carried upward and onward. A new world, new senses, new faculties, will give us more to know, so that all we have learned in this life will seem like the ignorance of a little child. And who can tell us how much there may not be to do hereafter? What great works may not be going on in the universe? The insoluble problems of life, which daunt and confound us here, are but the shadows thrown down on our globe from the vast events going forward in worlds beyond. The conflict between freedom and fate, the antagonism of soul and body, the existence of evil in a perfect world,— these mysteries are suggestions of how much there is to be known and done hereafter.

And how much, also, to be loved! Love here is one of the best things we have; but love here is only in its rudiments. What may it not become in the other world, when we shall be lifted into communion with the wise, the good, the noble, the beautiful, who have gone up and on; when we shall be surrounded by their sympathy, blessed by their love; when Christ shall come to find us with the angels and archangels, and when we, in our mansion, in our sphere, shall be able to work with them in theirs, for the advancement and redemption of the universe? Love made perfect, which casts out all fear, shall bring us into a heavenly sympathy with the whole creation of God.

The essential difference between heaven and hell, according to Augustine and the early Church Fathers, is this: that heaven is the sight of God, and hell is the loss of that sight. The "beatific vision," or seeing God, makes heaven; and not seeing him makes hell.

But we may see God in this world,—not directly, indeed; for he dwells in light inaccessible and full of glory. He is not hidden from us by darkness, but by light. As our ears are tuned to hear only a few octaves of music, and all the other harmonies of heaven and earth escape us, so, while "this muddy vesture of decay" shuts us in, our eye can only range through a certain scale of light. All above it is too bright, all below it too dark. God is present in nature around us. He is present in our own soul. But we see him in these indirectly. Yet we see him as in a glass darkly, see him as through a veil. In the order and wonder of creation, in the majesty of sunrise and sunset, in the infinite range of the midnight heavens, we feel God's presence.

We have the sense of an Infinite Power behind all finite forces, an Infinite Ordering Mind behind all law, an Infinite Love behind all goodness. And, in the trials and perplexities of life, in hours of sorrow and of sin, the heavens are sometimes opened and we see God. A calm peace comes down into the soul, a new life, a new power, fills our heart and our thought. We realize the presence of our heavenly Father.

Thus we can understand a little how we shall see God hereafter. Though we cannot look directly at the sun, we feel sunlight, and see it all around us. So we may see the shining of God, the sunlight of his love, all around us, as

by some other sense, by some deeper power than we have now. The religious man is as sure of God's presence in this world as he is of his own. He does not believe in God because of any argument. He knows God by the intuition of his own soul. When Paul said, "In him we live and move and have our being," he was just as sure of God's being as of his own.

In the other world, what Paul and other religious men have felt we shall all feel. "Blessed are the pure in heart," said Jesus, "for they shall see God." We all shall see God, and know him, as we now know the reality of things which the senses cannot show. We are not more sure of the existence of our bodies than we are of joy, sorrow, hope, fear, choice, reason, beauty, love. These are realities, though they cannot be touched, tasted, or seen with the outward eye. So shall God be known as near, as our life, as our strength, as our joy, as the root of all we are, as the hope of all we desire, as the boundless fountain of love, flowing evermore into our heart and our life.

Christ said to his disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." He may prepare a place for them and for us there, as he prepares it here.

Christ prepares the place for us here, and we enter a world Christianized for us by his influence. There is more of love in the world because Christ has been in it. God is loved rather than feared. Man is loved rather than hated. Jesus harmonizes, unites, and pacifies mankind.

And Jesus prepares a place for us in the other world in a like manner. When he went into the other world, he went not merely to seek there his own joy, but to prepare

ours. He went not to sit on a throne of glory, but, having prepared our place, to come and receive us to himself. He did not lose his love for the world or for mankind, or cease to work for our redemption when he entered heaven. His love for us did not diminish as he went nearer to God, but increased. He went into his rest in heaven, but his rest is a greater activity of good.

He prepares a place for us by awakening in the spirits above a sympathy like his own for the spirits below. His grace and truth penetrate the celestial spheres, as they have leavened the earthly ones. Thus with the great law of progress, by which souls ascend upward more and more, is joined Christ's law of love, by which the first becomes last, the highest archangel descending to the humblest work of sympathy. And thus is set aside forever that doubt which intrudes so often into loving hearts, whether those who were so dear to us in this life may not in their upward ascent have soared far away from our communion. "Can we be anything to them," we ask, "there?"

Yes. For, when Christ prepares a place for us, he comes to us to receive us to himself. And what Christ does, that do all those who belong to Christ and are like Christ. They do not go away from us by their progress, but come nearer to us. They do not lose their love for us, but have more of it, deeper, tenderer, larger, as they advance along the ascending highway of being. As Jacob in his dream saw on the ladders of heaven the angels of God not only ascending, but also descending, so forever do the good and true come down into a greater sympathy while they go up into loftier purity.

The next words confirm this truth, if it needs confirma-

tion. "I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there may ye be also." Christ wishes us to be with him. True, we cannot go to him. But, though the lower cannot go up to the higher, the higher can come down to the lower. This, then, is the beautiful and divine truth taught in this passage, — that where law divides, love reunites. Separate mansions, but the same home. Each soul its own place, work, opportunity, but each in union with the highest soul which loves it. The love of the pure and holy spirit brings it down into communion with the lower spirit. If our faces are turned upward, they descend to us.

Sometimes in dreams we have the foretaste of this heaven. Sometimes in dreams we feel ourselves visited by the noblest and grandest natures, who come and talk with us familiarly as friends. The barriers of condition, circumstance, and character, seem removed. We are at home with these immortal and divine spirits. Magnificent in wisdom, glowing with the glory of the skies, they yet treat us as the mother treats her child: they make us at home with them; they raise us into the same sphere as their own. I have had dreams of such superior essences, whom I seemed to know well and intimately, and who seemed to know me better than I knew myself. And this is my idea of heaven. To every one his own place, his own work, his own position, exactly fitted to his character, but every one visited from on high by these perpetually descending souls from more celestial spheres, taking us momentarily into their own peace and light and purity.